DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 193 630 CS 005 713

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TITLE Oral Interpretation: An Old Technique That Still Works.
PUB DATE [72]
NOTE 9p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; Motivation Techniques; *Oral Interpretation; *Reading Instruction; Remedial Reading; *Student Motivation; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

A teaching technique that has proven successful for many reading teachers, especially those working with remedial students, is oral interpretation. In this approach, the teacher reads passages to students using animated expression and enthusiastic body movements to liven the reading experience. A well-performed oral interpretation by a teacher can motivate students to read on their own, as well as reinforce their fundamental reading skills. The technique can be expanded by allowing students to study a particular reading assignment and then present their own oral readings to the class. This allows students with poor reading skills a chance to participate and gives them practice in the use of pitch, stress, and rhythm. In order to be a good oral interpreter, a teacher must pay attention to (1) correct pronunciation, (2) enunciation and emphasis, (3) appropriate facial expressions and body movements, (4) volume and projection, (5) pitch and tone, and (6) rate and pause. Oral interpretation can add an exciting dimension to classroom activities. It can attract and hold student attention while demonstrating the vitality of the written word. Through oral interpretation, students can experience reading from a new perspective of active involvement rather than with passive endurance. (A rating scale for a teacher's self-evaluation of oral interpretation skills is included.) (FL)

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ORAL INTERPRETATION:

AN OLD TECHNIQUE THAT STILL WORKS

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CS005713

ORAL INTERPRETATION: AN OLD TECHNIQUE THAT STILL WORKS

A major factor in learning to read or in acquiring any skill is the motivation of the learner. Student motivation is a basic problem faced by the reading teacher especially in working with remedial students.

A revived teaching technique that has experienced success with some teachers is oral interpretation. In this approach, the teacher reads passages to students using animated expression and enthusiastic body movements to liven and vitalize the reading experience. The dull, monotonous drone of much oral reading the learner has experienced is replaced by a dramatization that is alive with vim and vigor.

Some results that might be expected from well performed oral interpretation by a teacher are:

(1) Students become motivated to read on their own.

By observing the enthusiasm that can be applied to the reading experience, students can approach their reading with new goals and ideas for self-expression. They will have observed reading not as a dull, passive experience but as a dynamic, involving experience. A new level of involvement is perceived in which they may interject their own personality.

(2) Students reinforce fundamental reading skills.

Oral reading fluency is a result of the intermeshing of many elements. Guszak (1972) lists some as: skill in word recognition, comprehension of the selection, and familiarity with the selection concepts. Opportunities to use oral interpretation provide the practice necessary to improve these collective skills. Lamb (1971) notes that rich language activities such as this reinforce growth in basic reading skills.

(3) Students with poor reading skills are given an opportunity to participate.

The students can study a particular reading assignment and then present an oral reading to the class emphasizing the story with their own interpretation. This can be both self-rewarding and motivating to the students. Reinforcement by the teacher and attention from their peers may cause a more positive self-concept to emerge.

(4) Students increase their attention span.

The attention span of the student may be increased by oral interpretative reading. Students are usually attentive to expressions spiced with varied enunciation and changes in the pitch of the voice. The nonverbal expressions of the teacher can also entrap and hold the students' attention.

(5) Students can practice the use of pitch, stress, and rhythm while reading along with the teacher.

Poor readers can follow along with a copy of the material and observe someone else demonstrating pronunciation, emphasis and rhythm. An active model shows how reading can be an overt expression. A pattern and goal of expected behavior is more clearly defined. This can help the student develop oral fluency skills.

Some teachers have better oral interpretation skills than others. Although perhaps equally skilled in vocabulary and comprehension abilities, one teacher may excel in oral reading while another falters. Some oral

reading skills cannot be developed and improved. Some skills that should be present in oral interpretation are:

(1) Pronunciation

The teacher must insure that she is using correct pronunciation in all oral reading. Any question as to the pronunciation of a word should be clarified prior to the reading. Dialects, and slurring of words should be eliminated as much as possible.

(2) Enunciation and Emphasis

The teacher should use precise enunciation and aggressive emphasis in order to give the reading force and vitality. Studying of passages prior to their presentation is absolutely necessary for proper emphasis in the correct locations. The total affect of the presentation could hinge on the quality of enunciation and emphasis utilized by the teacher.

(3) Appropriate facial expressions and body movements.

The nonverbal means of conveying meaning are well-received by children and are crucial when dramatizing a reading. Whether the mood is one of sadness, excitement, anxiety or whatever, the teacher's facial expressions and body movements enable students to see as well as to hear the mood and thereby enhance comprehension.

(4) Volume and Projection

The reader must be clearly audible. It is extremely distressing for an audience to strain in attempting to hear a speaker. The reading must be of ample volume and projection for the listener. The reader must practice in sustaining adequate volume without distortion in pronunciation and

clarity.

(5) Pitch and Tone

The pitch changes spice the reading with interesting variations. A richness and vigor allows feeling and moods to transmit to the audience. The tone quality projected by the reader determines the pleasantness with which the audience receives the message. A natural, flowing quality that enchants and pleases the audience is a desirable objective.

(6) Rate and Pause

The rate of speech should be adjusted to the style and purpose of the material. Much meaning and interpretation can be added through variations in the rate of the reading. The reading should never be rushed unless the accelerated pace is demanded by the material. Pauses are critical in building emphasis and reinforcement of emotional expression, and should be carefully planned in both location and duration.

The quality of oral interpretation can be improved. A major vehicle for improvement is practice. Concentrate on specific areas that need improvement and stress these qualities during independent practice. Recording one's practice efforts can provide valuable assistance. A quick playback helps one observe progress and to identify areas needing improvement. A simple cassette tape recorder can enable one to critique his own readings or to allow friends to assist in evaluation. Where equipment is available, videotape recorders can add the dimension of sight accompanied with sound, enabling a more complete analysis of performance. Audio recordings and video recordings are also valuable learning materials for independent or small group involvement on the part of students. Students may also receive

sufficient motivation allowing them to record their own interpretive readings.

The following rating scale has been developed to assist in identifying areas in oral interpretive reading that may need special attention. This scale can be used for self-rating and also anonomously by students or peers.

ORAL INTERPRETATION SELF-CHECK

	always	frequently	not sure	infrequently	never
1. I pronounce words clearly.					
2. My speech is free from dialects and slurring.					
3. I utilize precise enunciation.					
4. I use appropriate facial expressions and body movements.					
5. The volume of my voice is adequate.					
6. I project my voice toward the audience.					
7. My voice possesses good pitch and quality.					
8. My rate of speech adjusts properly to the material.					
9. I properly locate and space pauses.					
10. My overall presentation is pleasing.					

If the responses to some statements fall in the never, infrequently and not sure category, then these are definitely areas for attention and practice. Responses in the frequently category can receive attention when the overall presentation begins to reach a quality level.

Oral interpretation can add an exciting dimension to classroom activities. It can attract and hold attention while demonstrating the vitality of the written word. It can soar with action, animating the printed page. Students can experience reading from a new perception of active involvement rather than with passive endurance. Hopefully, it can interest and motivate students in learning to read and can unlock the tantalizing door of the written word.

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